

# N.C. PRAMS FACT SHEET

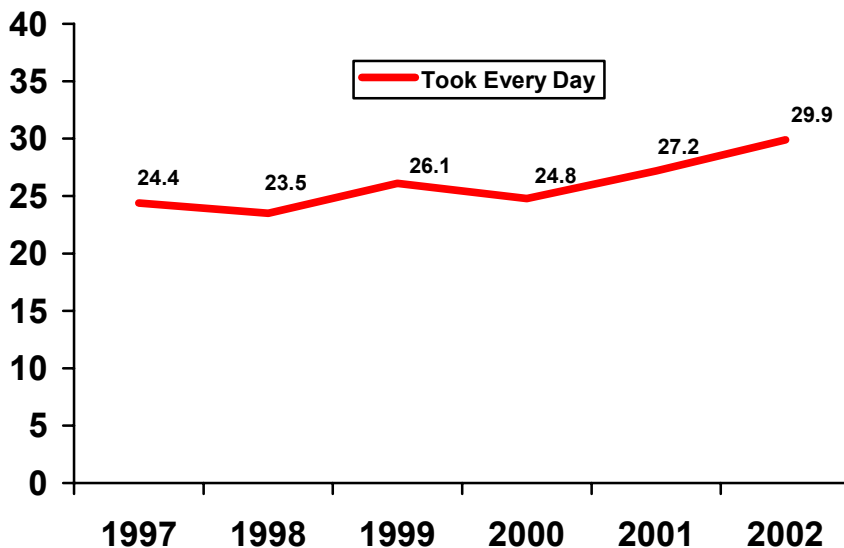
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## Folic Acid Awareness: 2002 N.C. Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS)

- Folic acid, a B vitamin, helps prevent birth defects of the brain and spinal cord when taken at least one month before becoming pregnant and through at least the first three months of pregnancy.
- Folic acid helps a baby's neural tube – the part of the developing baby that becomes the brain and spinal cord – develop properly.
- Nearly 2,500 children are born each year in the United States with a neural tube defect. If all women took adequate folic acid before conception and during pregnancy, the number of babies born with a neural tube defect could drop as much as 70 percent.
- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms of folic acid every day.
- Because the most common neural tube defects occur during the first 28 days of pregnancy (usually *before* a woman even knows she is pregnant) it is recommended that all women of childbearing age consume a multivitamin containing 400 micrograms of folic acid.
- The national Healthy People 2010 target is to have 80 percent of non-pregnant women ages 15 to 44 years to consume at least 400 micrograms of folic acid every day from fortified foods (found most commonly in leafy green vegetables, orange juice, and enriched grains) or dietary supplements (which are more bioavailable to the body).

**Percentage of women with a recent live birth who reported taking a multivitamin containing folic acid every day (one month before became pregnant): N.C. PRAMS, 1997-2002**



– The percentage of women with a recent live birth who reported taking a multivitamin containing folic acid every day the month before they became pregnant has increased more than 5 percentage points from 24.4 percent in 1997 to nearly 30 percent in 2002.

– This is still well below the Healthy People 2010 target of 80 percent.

– Data from the 2001 NC BRFSS (telephone survey of the general population of adults 18+) show a higher percentage of women (ages 18-44) reporting daily consumption of a multivitamin containing folic acid (42.2%). This difference could be due in part to the younger respondents in the PRAMS survey (many of whom are under the age of 25). Younger women are less likely to take folic acid.